

EUROPEAN UNION REFUSES TO STAY BURIED

The London Conference — and After

HERBERT LUETHY

FEW conferences in the rather melancholy history of postwar diplomacy have closed with such expressions of universal satisfaction as marked the end of the recent nine-power meeting in London. Complete success had been achieved for all concerned—and at nobody's expense. It was "one of the greatest diplomatic achievements of our time," President Eisenhower declared. There is a large element of relief in all this rejoicing. In view of the catastrophes expected after the collapse of EDC, the results of the London conference seem almost miraculous. A threatening chain reaction of dissension, recrimination, and retaliation has been halted; dead hopes have been buried without too many words, and a new beginning made.

For several of the statesmen involved the result was a personal triumph, even a life-saver. Anthony Eden emerged as the most successful diplomat of our time, "the specialist in hopeless situations," and gained the prominence he needed as Churchill's heir apparent. Mendès-France won the ac-

THE London conference in September has been hailed as a dramatic and hopeful reversal in the tide of European affairs. How did it happen, and *what* actually happened? Once again, events seemed to revolve around Pierre Mendès-France, to whom HERBERT LUETHY devoted a searching article in our October number. Mr. Luethy brings that article up to date, so to speak, by an analysis of the complex of moods and tendencies that has now enabled the West to retrieve in part, but only in part, the losses it suffered when EDC was defeated. Mr. Luethy was born in Basel, Switzerland, in 1918, and took his doctorate at the University of Zurich in history and the Romance languages. His interests extend to literature and economics as well as to contemporary politics, and he has published a book on Montaigne and, more recently, one on contemporary France.

ceptance of his allies in London, disarmed his opposition at home, and is now at last firmly in the saddle. Adenauer, ironically, achieved a triumph of *Realpolitik* for his country—sovereignty, admission to the Atlantic Pact, and to the Brussels alliance—which last he had not sought and did not want, and which fell into his lap for just that reason. Spaak brilliantly repaired the damage done in Brussels, and once more displayed his acrobatic talents as a mediator. Dulles for once was able to lay aside his role as "villain" and play the pleasanter one of sympathetic mediator. Lester Pearson brought the weight of Canada's influence to bear on Atlantic and European affairs.

Truly, the general congratulations seemed fully justified. The new "realism" (which most recognize, indeed hail, as the revival of old-fashioned balance-of-power diplomacy) had brilliantly demonstrated that it can overcome immediate difficulties. Even more, it has shown how advantageous it can be in the day-to-day business of national politics to replace ideas with brilliant improvisations—such as the really inspired one, for example, of substituting for European Union a refurbished Brussels Pact now no longer aimed at Germany but taking her in, and seeming thus to promise a greater, more splendid Europe, "better and cheaper."

BUT observers concerned with realities rather than with "realism" noted almost at once that the content of this resuscitated Brussels Pact, embryonic forerunner of the great Western alliance—which has remained embryonic—is as unclear after the London conference as it was before. In the reaffirmed Atlantic Pact it stands symbolically for the dead European Defense Community, but only symbolically. Whether it is now to ex-

ercise any real unifying function within the Atlantic alliance, aside from serving as a Continental inspection measure, is a question that was turned over to the experts "for further study." Not a single real decision was made on it; and except for Mendès-France, no one showed any desire to go through the same old business of debating European unity again (with the French now playing the part of impassioned champions rather than covert saboteurs of "European integration"). Yet the decisive *psychological* role that this symbolic recognition of European unification played in the new turn, and will continue to play, is indisputable. Only through the Brussels Pact did the solemn British "joining of Europe," which the French as well as the German "left" had made the absolute precondition for agreement to any European union, take place; and only by the roundabout route of such a union did it seem possible to admit Germany into the great alliance. Now a formal demand has been formally satisfied.

The French—as Paul Reynaud remarked sarcastically—love written, stamped, and officially notarized contracts as passionately as the British abhor them, and now the British government has finally put into written, stamped, and notarized form its pledge, already solemnly given a dozen times, that Great Britain would not withdraw from Europe. This is a revolutionary event in British history, for the English have always found it easier to overturn a whole social structure than undo a customary formality. But that is just about all that their new readiness to accept "European ties" amounts to—a formality. Whatever the powers of the Brussels organization will be, they will apply exclusively to the Continent: Britain is ready—albeit not without reluctance—to help administer the controls imposed on her European partners, but in no case to submit to them herself.

Whatever super-national powers may be added to the Brussels Pact in response to the now resurgent French wish—as surprising as it is loud—for more genuine "integration," they can only lead back, step by step,

to the same "Little Europe" idea (now deprecated as inferior to the just accepted "more universal" idea) that went up in smoke with the French rejection of EDC. Still, the "Little Europe" idea was no chimera: it was, and remains, the only real chance for a binding union, one which establishes for a *limited* number of countries a minimum of *common* institutions and ties—a minimum that neither Great Britain nor Scandinavia is yet ready for. Whereas the Brussels Pact represents a retreat to a kind of *uncommitted co-operation* in which anybody at all can participate. At the London conference one heard it said that really all the nations now, from Norway to Turkey, could come in. And there is no reason, really, why America and Canada, too, should not join the Brussels Pact under the same conditions, or why, for that matter, it should not in the end be dissolved into the Atlantic Pact—since now, after the outright admission of Germany, the safeguard of the Brussels agreement is no longer needed as that "antechamber" thought to be required for ushering Germany into the Atlantic one.

THE only thing on which there is a commitment is the matter of the troops stationed in Europe—in spite of the escape clause Britain tacked on to her pledge to maintain her present troop strength on the Continent. It is a little difficult for Continental Europeans to understand how much it costs the English to make even this limited pledge. Once more the question of whether she "has ceased to be an island" is being hotly discussed in England—as it was in the past whenever a British government declared that Britain's frontiers lay on the Rhine, or the Vistula, or the Elbe—and it will, no doubt, be hotly discussed again. For although, in a refined sense, it is certainly true that "there are no islands any more," one can be sure there are still islands in a gross physical sense, and that England is one of them. Even a paper like the *Economist*, which came out long ago for a formal British pledge to keep troops on the Continent—when this would still have been enough to

save the European Defense Community—notes gravely that “Mr. Eden has persuaded Sir Winston Churchill to do something which it is a standing axiom of British foreign policy *never* to do,” namely, “to assume a new obligation which has not been assumed and subscribed to at the same time by the United States.” Yet, in truth, the axiom is not a very old one—one might call it the “Churchill Doctrine”—and in any case this “standing axiom” holds true only for Europe.

The “Churchill Doctrine” had to be, if not repudiated, at least bent to accord with the corresponding French doctrine, which is likewise not very old, and might be called the “Mendès Doctrine”: not to commit France one step further in Europe than England was committed. “For a long time it has been an axiom of French policy never to separate ourselves from England,” Mendès-France declared during the EDC debate. (Curious that his predecessors, de Gaulle, Schuman, and Bidault, apparently never heard of this axiom.) So finally all the powers are left with their own commitments, since the commitments of others only hold good so long as one’s own do. This is the principle of every good alliance, even if in this case it was arrived at the wrong way around.

What is really involved was perhaps expressed most naively and openly by the gallant General Adolphe Aumeran, who was never taken quite seriously until he carved a niche for himself in history by initiating the motion to kill EDC. Not only, said the General, is the European Defense Community a work of the devil from beginning to end, but “it is no less grave an error to approve of German rearmament under any form, integrated or not integrated, since this rearmament destroys the possibility of a *strategy of retreat* such as is absolutely essential to our armies in case of an attack from the East. . . .” [*italics mine*].

The cogency of this argument is undeniable—as undeniable as the reflection to which the same line of thought, pursued a few hundred or a few thousand miles farther west, must lead: that the defense of France

hinders England (which is, perhaps, no longer an island, but still more of one than France) from falling back on that strategy of retreat to which several times in her history she has turned with great success. And the defense of Europe hinders America (which is really an island, too) in that strategy of retreat to Fortress America, that “peripheral strategy” which some Americans consider the only correct one for their rather more isolated, and isolatable, island. Naturally, this kind of insular, shall we say, isolationist, thinking does not lend itself to any very complicated arrangements. If each partner in an alliance prevents the others from retreating any farther than he can himself, the alliance will not be a very enthusiastic one. But at least it will be well armed for the test of—“peaceful coexistence.”

Now that the London conference has to some extent cleared away the fog of the EDC debate, one can see more clearly what really was being fought over and what was not. The Atlantic Pact was never in question. Outwardly, it has emerged from the storm strengthened and broadened, and if there is still great danger that the London agreement will be wrecked before it reaches final formulation and ratification, the outlook now is better than ever before, because the French nay-sayers, frightened by their own daring, realize that another “nay” would knock the bottom out of the barrel.

What was also never in question, as it turned out to everybody’s amazement, was the German defense contribution. The French National Assembly has accepted without serious opposition what yesterday still seemed inconceivable, what this same parliament had unequivocally vetoed again and again, and what, if such a proposal had come from Schuman or Bidault, would have caused a riot: the outright admission of West Germany into the Atlantic Pact.

Watching the behavior of deputies who for two years talked themselves hoarse against the “resurrection of the Wehrmacht,” and reading newspapers like *Le Monde* or *Combat*, which wanted to wreck the whole At-

lantic alliance rather than permit a single German soldier in a European Army, but now acclaim the London decisions as a diplomatic triumph for France, one is reminded of the Biblical phrase about those who "strain at a gnat and swallow a camel." In reality, the "national-minded" French politicians were not directing their outcries against German rearmament or Germany's entry into the Western alliance. Whether they were for or against EDC, they conjured up the same apparitions—Wehrmacht, Prussian militarism, and the hereditary enemy—to warn against either acceptance or rejection. In the end, no one could tell the difference between the arguments "for" and the arguments "against." *Actually, the whole fuss was over France's, not Germany's entrance into a super-national community.* And in this sense it was true, as one deputy, Pierre André, roundly declared, that "the European Defense Community was worse than the Wehrmacht." For many a Frenchman, the EDC debate was a moment of truth.

What was wrecked—or perhaps only checked, since the basic factors that led in the first place to projects for European unification still operate—was the attempt, bold and yet timid, to pose the problem of Europe in a framework of new concepts and new loyalties. These were not a denial of the nation but a broadening of it, expressing recognition of a solidarity that embraced the national while reaching beyond it. It was an attempt to act on a very old but neglected insight—"If I knew of something that helped my country but harmed Europe," Montesquieu once said, "I would be ashamed of the thought."

It was, however, the voice of the ancient, classic Jacobin France, "one and indivisible," that spoke at the end of the EDC debate through the mouth of gray old Herriot, who has just given Mendès-France his wholehearted blessing, when he deliberately chose the one article in the whole EDC treaty that seemed least open to question in order to demonstrate the horror of the whole idea. Article 20 bound the members of the European Defense Commission "not to seek or

accept the instructions of any government in the fulfillment of their duties," and to "refrain from any action incompatible with the super-national character of their function"—this, of course, being precisely what "Europe" means. "Well," Herriot declared, "I say that this text is as monstrous as it is ridiculous. What true Frenchman would stoop to representing his country in such a way? This is monstrous and ridiculous, for it means rewarding those *who are disloyal*. . . . To think that one can obligate people to renounce their national origins . . . not to put the defense of their country, their fatherland, before everything else, seems to me so monstrous that I cannot accept the thought. . . . What kind of commissioners would these be? Abstract beings, supermen or robots, to rule, command, and direct us. I say that this Article 20 is a degradation of France that I do not accept. . . ."

And once more victory went to those unable to see further than the nation, national loyalty, and national interest. It was a very natural victory, when you come to think of it, in a country that had created and perfected the idea itself of the nation. But it cannot be a true or lasting victory, for among the 319 deputies who killed the European Defense Community there were a hundred Communists, who long ago had chosen another loyalty than France—and another loyalty than Europe.*

*It is estimated that ratification of the Western European Union and West German armament by the signatory nations will take six months or more, during which time we may expect the French to raise all sorts of reservations calculated—as in the case of EDC—to limit their commitment. But more important, to those who fear where Mendès-France's opportunistic *Realpolitik* may lead, is the apprehension that he seeks a deal with the Soviet Union over Germany which would make ratification unnecessary in the end. At any rate, he has made plain his purpose to embark on "parallel negotiations" aiming at an accord with Moscow. He said in the National Assembly on October 6: "You know and the Soviet Union knows that it will take time—two or three years doubtless—for the London decisions regarding German rearmament to come into effect. It is not too optimistic to hope that during that period negotiations will have progressed, and perhaps been completed, on the subject of disarmament. . . ."

IN THIS confused pause in the cold war, when Europeans everywhere except in the border zones are forgetting how provisional and precarious the existence of their rump of a continent is, old habits and notions of an exclusively national politics seem inviting and convenient once again to many people. The present failure of European integration has created no immediate new troubles, and has spared everybody the troubles that any truly far-reaching innovation would bring. From the standpoint of immediate, practical politics—as well as from the standpoint of the politicians of “realism” as opposed to those of “ideology”—the exchange of the European Defense Community for the London alliance of national armies is a good bargain. Nor does it necessarily follow that now *all* the fatal mistakes of the past must be repeated: Europe’s situation is too deeply changed for that.

True, European politics will return to many of its old ruts. Franco-German friction as such will once again become acute. During the EDC debate Mendès-France acknowledged that a “European” solution of the Saar question was inconceivable without European institutions, and that he knew of no others. What can now be seen more clearly from Saarbrücken, where the French rejection of EDC caused a real panic, than from Paris, is that if a “European solution” is renounced there will be no lasting “French” solution either.

Another thing came up to bother the French parliament five weeks after this remark of Mendès-France’s. The twelve divisions permitted Germany—four times the size of the Reichswehr the Versailles Treaty allowed the Weimar Republic—will very soon, once the agreement goes into effect, be twelve *effective* divisions; but of the fourteen French divisions that are to represent their “counterweight,” only two now exist in effective strength. Will the Mendès-France government be the one to start an armaments race? Once back inside the old familiar world of national rivalries, national distrust, and national prerogatives, all this will quickly take on the same bitter taste as

of yore. That yesterday’s tragedies can be revived in the form of petty quarrels at most, is small consolation: even petty quarrels are dangerous when you are teetering on the edge of an abyss.

BUT if rational understanding will not prevent the Balkanization of Europe, mutual dependence may, setting limits to the foolhardiness of “national-minded” statesmen. The collapse of EDC has again demonstrated that every triumph for European sectionalism only intensifies the more Europe’s passivity as regards both her enemies and her protectors. The French “revolt of national pride” against subordination to European institutions that would have given France her due weight in the Atlantic alliance has had as its sole and logical result the enhancement of the role of America and Britain as the guardians of Europe. The part Britain is to play as a member of the Brussels Pact Organization, sharing in all its rights but exempt from almost all its duties, was expressly defined by Pierre Mendès-France as that of “umpire and middleman” between France and Germany. And in practice all authority over the “integration,” stationing, and control of the Continental European armies has, in the absence of any European authority, been handed over to the American Supreme Commander in Europe, General Gruenther. In consenting to this, Mendès-France has only continued that policy which was at bottom—first openly, then tacitly, but always with unerring consistency—Bidault’s policy as opposed to Schuman’s: “Atlantic” instead of “European integration,” i.e., American hegemony instead of European partnership.

The rejection of EDC, we can see now, much as it may have looked like an attempt to break out of the Atlantic alliance, added up to no such thing. It was rather a refusal to give up the dependent status of a protected nation. This kind of nationalism, sulky yet content to live in pupilage, has more in common with local patriotism and the cult of tradition than with the warlike national arrogance of former days.

A RETURN to the old habits of a politics based on national interests is now a possibility, in this time of relative calm, for almost all the nations of Western Europe, even if it awakens enthusiasm nowhere but in France. The only country where it is still wholly impossible is Germany. By all the classic yardsticks of national politics, Germany has emerged as the great winner from the London conference. She got everything that the European Defense Community withheld from her: sovereignty, membership in the Atlantic alliance, military equality, and as a special treat, the making over of the Brussels Pact, which had been expressly directed against the "German danger," into an alliance with her. But strangely, she received these gifts without much joy. Nor was Adenauer, who took the collapse of the European Defense Community as a personal tragedy, the only German not to show joy—"Adenauer bet on France and lost," said the *Economist* after the vote in Paris; he himself complained bitterly in London that for the French "a Germany with a national army was preferable to Europe"; and he foresaw, with prophetic horror, the forced return of Germany to a policy of narrow nationalism as a result of the death of EDC. Even Adenauer's Socialist and Nationalist opponents showed no joy at all at having received everything they had always demanded.

Their divided country, down whose middle the East-West line of the cold war runs, can have no real sovereignty even if it receives all the attributes thereof—and if it had real sovereignty it could do nothing with it but mischief. For Germany no policy of "national *Realpolitik*" is possible; its most obvious national goals, such as reunification, could only be obtained at the cost of a complete dislocation of the international equilibrium, as a result of a miracle or a catastrophe. Germany, as a power, finds herself in a situation whose untenability is obvious, but release from which does not depend on herself. At the same time the situation, for all its absurdity, does permit Germans to do very well materially. Under the circum-

stances it is natural that the middle-class German concentrates on his own business, gets along, and does not worry about how things will turn out in the end. Nothing is more revealing of the situation than the incapacity of the German opposition, even today, when it shouts about the bankruptcy of the Adenauer policy from the rooftops, to offer an alternative to it. Its politics reduces itself either to the mechanical affirmation of the opposite of what Adenauer wants, or to bare election slogans that appeal to national resentment, popular pacifism, or mere wishful thinking.

It is a sterile and impossible situation which the German burgher tries to forget in hard work and material achievement; but nothing would be more dangerous than to forget that this apparently "normal" absorption in the daily round of "business" is completely dependent on a precarious international situation that we have no reason as yet for ceasing to describe as a "cold war."

"BACK to domestic politics" is the great slogan now, and "peaceful coexistence" seems to justify the retreat from world politics. Mendès-France wants nothing better than to get the problems of foreign policy off his neck as quickly as possible so as to turn all his attention to the internal recovery of France. It is characteristic that when the French National Assembly had to approve the London agreement, thereby flying in the face of all its loftily announced principles of five weeks before, a wage raise voted the day before decided the issue: a six-franc increase in the legal minimum wage counterbalanced the admission of Germany into the Atlantic alliance and saved the face of the French parliament!

"Back to domestic politics" is the slogan today in Germany too, and unquestionably there is a great deal for both the Bonn government and legislature to do. But the first "domestic political questions" that Adenauer's opposition will raise are: reunification, trade with the East, and the calling of a four-power conference—to which the Bonn Republic would not be a party, or would

be one only on the same footing as the East German "Democratic Republic." In other words, Germany has no domestic politics that can be fitted comfortably into a divided Europe. No national political possibilities exist for her in the present, and the purely domestic activities of the Bonn Republic cannot create such possibilities.

No one knows this better than Adenauer, which is what makes him so superior to all the cleverer, nimbler, and more "realistic" local politicians of Bonn. Soberly considered, Germany has no future as a nation; she only has a future if one likes to engage in reckless speculation. She does not even any longer have a national past: the history of the last twenty or forty years has been blotted from her memory as if it happened to some other country. To speak of the Nazi past is the worst kind of tactlessness in present-day Germany. In "Europe" Germany saw a way to escape the fatality of her own history and to begin anew. To be sure, many German "Europeans" only embraced the idea of a United Europe as a salve for their uneasy consciences. But nevertheless it *was* a way—politically and spiritually the only way—to begin afresh. If Germany must now turn back to the dust and ashes of a

national history of insensate violence and stupid failure, she will find nothing but ghosts warning her away from the past, and very few guiding principles to point the road to the future.

NO COUNTRY can live entirely without the vision of some future. Here the European ideal, if it dies out, threatens to leave a spiritual vacuum that will be immeasurably harder to fill than the military one. Germany today, having turned her back on her past, has no definite tradition or goal to which to give her loyalty, such as in old and intact countries springs from the continuity of a common history; in Germany this loyalty is uncommitted and unattached. It was, and still is, available for a kind of European solidarity that means more than a military coalition, for that "super-national loyalty" whose mere thought seemed so monstrous to Edouard Herriot when he inveighed against the EDC in the National Assembly. But it would be unwise to try to say who might come along tomorrow and monopolize this loyalty if the West does not succeed in giving it a content. In Germany, and because of Germany, "Europe" remains on the agenda.

THE MARRIAGE

HARVEY SHAPIRO

WHEN they were canopied, and had the wine
To lace their spirits in the trembling cup,
And all the holy words sang round their heads
In tribute to the maker and the vine,
He saw the leeching sea lap, like darkness,
Up her summer's gown, as if dark time

And he should race to claim the maidenhead.
When he smashed the cup, then ruin spread.
The dazzled floor showed sea and blood.
Beyond this harvest that the ritual bore
(Their mothers weeping on the farther shore)
They saw the journeying years extend.
And Zion's hill rose for their reckoning.

HARVEY SHAPIRO's verse continues to appear frequently in such literary journals as, among others, *Poetry*, *Epoch*, *New Voices*. This is his third poem in our pages.